



THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER
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Public Split Evenly on Urgency of Debt Limit Debate

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Public Split Evenly on Urgency of Debt Limit Deadline

While administration officials project an economic catastrophe if the debt limit is not raised by Aug. 2, many Americans do not see this deadline as a major problem. Four-in-ten (40%) say that, from what they've read and heard, it is absolutely essential that the federal debt limit be raised by Aug. 2 to avoid an economic crisis, while about as many (39%) say the country can go past this date without major economic problems.

By a 53% to 30% margin, most Republicans say that it will not be a major problem if the debt ceiling is not raised by Aug. 2. The balance of opinion is the reverse among Democrats: 56% say it is absolutely essential to meet that deadline to avoid an economic crisis, 28% say it is not. Independents are more divided, though a slim 43% plurality say the country can go past Aug. 2 without major economic problems, while 32% say it is essential to raise the debt limit by this date.

The new survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, conducted July 15-17 among 764 adults, finds that Tea Party Republicans are by far the most unconvinced about the potential fallout from going past the Aug. 2 deadline. Fully 65% of Republicans and Republican leaning independents who agree with the Tea Party see no major problems if this occurs, compared with 45% of Republicans and Republican leaners who do not agree with the Tea Party.

Republicans, Especially Tea Party Supporters, See No Crisis

| | Essential to raise debt limit by Aug 2 to avoid crisis | Can go past Aug 2 without major problems | DK | N |
|--|--|--|--------|-----|
| | % | % | % | |
| Total | 40 | 39 | 21=100 | 764 |
| Republican | 30 | 53 | 17=100 | 210 |
| Democrat | 56 | 28 | 17=100 | 237 |
| Independent | 32 | 43 | 25=100 | 237 |
| <i>Among Rep/Rep leaners</i> | 27 | 55 | 18=100 | 307 |
| Agree w/Tea Party | 20 | 65 | 15=100 | 163 |
| Disagree/No opinion | 34 | 45 | 21=100 | 141 |
| <i>Following news about debt limit debate...</i> | | | | |
| Very closely | 45 | 41 | 14=100 | 289 |
| Fairly closely | 42 | 40 | 18=100 | 234 |
| Not too/at all closely | 34 | 38 | 29=100 | 237 |

PEW RESEARCH CENTER July 15-17, 2011.
Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Notably, the degree of attention to this issue has only a modest relationship with peoples' impressions of the seriousness of the Aug. 2 deadline. Those who are following the issue very closely are divided over whether it is essential to raise the debt limit by Aug. 2 to

avoid crisis – 45% say it is essential, 41% say it is not. Those who are following the story less closely also are divided.

Most Republicans and GOP leaning independents (59%) who have been following the issue very or fairly closely say the country can go past Aug. 2 without major problems; about the same percentage of Democrats and Democratic leaners (61%) who have been following this issue very or fairly closely say it would be a major crisis.

About the Survey

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted July 15-17, 2011, among a national sample of 764 adults 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (458 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 306 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 128 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers at Princeton Data Source under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English. Respondents in the landline sample were selected by randomly asking for the youngest adult male or female who is now at home. Interviews in the cell sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone, if that person was an adult 18 years of age or older. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see: <http://people-press.org/methodology/detailed>.

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin, region, and population density to parameters from the March 2010 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status, based on extrapolations from the 2010 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size within the landline sample. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. The following table shows the sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

| Group | Sample Size | Plus or minus ... |
|--|--------------------|--------------------------|
| Total sample | 764 | 4.5 percentage points |
| Republicans | 210 | 8.5 percentage points |
| Democrats | 237 | 8.0 percentage points |
| Independents | 237 | 8.0 percentage points |
| <i>Among Republicans and Republican leaners:</i> | | |
| Agree with Tea Party | 163 | 9.5 percentage points |
| Disagree/No opinion | 141 | 10.0 percentage points |

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER
July 14-17, 2011 OMNIBUS
FINAL TOPLINE
N=1006**

PEW.1 THROUGH PEW.3 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

ASK FRIDAY THROUGH SUNDAY [N=764]:

PEW.4 From what you've read and heard, do you think **[INSERT; RANDOMIZE]**, or do you think **[INSERT; RANDOMIZE]**?

Jul 15-17
2011

| | |
|----|--|
| 40 | It is absolutely essential that the federal debt limit be raised by August 2 nd to avoid an economic crisis |
| 39 | The country can go past the August 2nd date for when the government reaches its debt limit without major economic problems |
| 21 | Don't Know/Refused(VOL.) |